

## And when the Ark would journey. (10:35)

*Va'yehi bin'soa haAron*, "And when the Ark would journey," are the first three words of the shortest *sefer* in the Torah. In the *Talmud Shabbos* 115b, *Chazal* teach, Hashem placed markings (inverted *nuns*) immediately preceding and following this section (of only two verses) to enclose it and separate it from the rest of the Torah. This was done to teach that this is not its proper place. (These *pesukim* belong earlier in *Perek* 2 of *Sefer Bamidbar* where the Torah describes how each tribe camped under its banner.) Rabbi (Yehudah *HaNasi*) says, "It is not for this reason that the signs (inverted *nuns*) appear, but rather, because this section ranks as a significant Book unto itself."

The *Parsha/Book* of *Va'yehi bin'soa* contains eighty-five letters. The number of letters has *halachic* significance: If there is sufficient writing to form whole words, which number eighty-five letters that are still intact, within a Torah scroll that has become worn, we may save it from a fire on *Shabbos*. If not, we may not save it.

*Chazal* quote the *pasuk* in *Mishlei* 9:1, *Chatzvah amudeh'ha shivah*, "[Wisdom has built her house;] she carved out her (its) seven pillars," as referring to the seven Books of the Torah. Following *Rashi's* commentary, we now have: *Bereishis*; *Shemos*; *Vayikra*, *Bamidbar* – until *Va'yehi binsoa*; then *Va'yehi binsoa*; the rest of *Bamidbar* following *Va'yehi binsoa*; and *Devarim*.

Based on the above, there is a question that begs elucidation: The entire Torah is made up of *Sefarim*, Books, which are so much larger than this tiny *parsha/segment*. How could a "Sefer" comprised of a mere eighty-five letters have equal standing with the others? In his *Shevilei Pinchas*, *Horav Pinchas Friedman*, *Shlita*, cites the *Chida* in his *Nachal Kedumim*, who quotes the *Sefer Kaf V'Naki* in its *k'sav yad*, original manuscript, that presents us with an incredible explanation: "The *Shaar Nun*, fiftieth gate, was hidden from Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Therefore, two inverted *nuns* immediately precede and follow *Va'yehi bin'soa*, to allude to the *nun/fifty Shaarei Binah*, Gates of Understanding. *Sefer Va'yehi bin'soa* is (thus) equivalent to the entire Torah, and all he (Moshe) merited from it was eighty-five letters."

Obviously, much more of this commentary is couched in esoteric profundity. We will attempt to explain by taking bits and pieces, which will illuminate a number of issues concerning the actual size of the Torah. In his *Sefer Midbar Kedaimos*, the *Chida* applies the novel idea expressed by the *Kaf v'Naki* to explain a lingering question based upon a well-known statement by the *Zohar HaChadash*. The *Zohar* writes that the Torah is comprised of 600,000 letters. The *Megaleh Amukos* adds that just as there are 600,000 letters in the Torah, so, too, there are 600,000 souls, each one coinciding with its individual letter in the Torah. This is alluded by the name *Yisrael*, whose letters are an abbreviation for *Yeish shishim ribo osios la'Torah*, "There are sixty myriads (10,000) letters in the Torah."

Anyone who can count the letters will note, as the commentators did, that there are actually

304,805 letters in the Torah. What happened to the rest? There are a number of explanations –most notable is that of the *Pnei Yehoshua* in his commentary to the *Talmud Kiddushin* 30a. He wrote that, while the *Torah sheh'B'Ksav*, Written Law, has only half of the 600,000 letters, we include the *Targum*, Aramaic translation, which was also transmitted to Moshe at *Har Sinai* (and it comprises the balance of the letters).

We now return to our original question, concerning how a book of such miniscule size could parallel the significance of the other *Chumashim*. In the *Talmud Rosh Hashanah* 21b, *Chazal* make the following statement: “*Chamishim Shaarei Binah nivreu b’olam*, Fifty Gates of Understanding were created in the world” (these gates represent the various reasons for each law in the Torah). *V’Kulan nitnu l’Moshe chaseir echad*, “and all but one were given to Moshe,” as it is written: *va’techas’reihu me’at meiElokim*, “But You have made him only slightly wanting in (understanding) Divinity.” *Maharal* says that this “one” refers to the understanding of G-d’s very essence.

The *Shlah HaKadosh* quotes the *Arizal* who says that when Moshe ascended *Har Sinai* to accept the Torah, he actually received the Fiftieth level of Understanding. After the Jewish People sinned with the Golden Calf, it was taken from him. This is alluded to by Hashem’s statement to Moshe following the sin: *Lech Reid ki shicheis amcha*, “Go down, for your nation has become corrupt”(Shemos 32:7). The *gematria*, numeral equivalent, of *lech* is fifty, coinciding with the fifty Gates of Understanding. Hashem told Moshe, “Go down from your Fiftieth level of Understanding – because your nation has become corrupt.”

We are being taught by the *Kaf v’Naki* that during *Mattan Torah*, the Giving of the Torah, *Parashas Vayehi bin’soa* was indeed a very large *sefer*. It was as large as the rest of the Torah. Because it was a component of the Fiftieth level of Understanding, however, it was hidden as a result of the sin of the Golden Calf. All that was left were eighty-five letters.

We now understand the hidden message of the inverted *nuns*. The *nun* was above the other letters, to teach us that what we have before us is what is left of Moshe’s exposure to the fiftieth gate of understanding. It is inverted as if to indicate that the rest of the *parsha* in a sense “turned” its back on us. We now posit that the *Chazal* which teaches that the Torah contains six hundred thousand letters is referring to the **entire** Torah, including the original unabridged Book of *Vayehi bin’soa*. After the sin of the Golden Calf, it was reduced to a mere eighty-five letters.